

Veterans HEALTH MATTERS

WELLNESS MAGAZINE FOR VETERANS IN FLORIDA, SOUTH GEORGIA & THE CARIBBEAN

WINTER 2015 | WWW.VISN8.VA.GOV

TAKE ONE HOME



page

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Caregiver's Guide to Seasonal Stress

Taking care of the Veteran you love is both rewarding and exhausting. Add to that the extra stress of family get-togethers, gift giving, decorating and cooking can be overwhelming. To help you cope with stress on top of stress, follow these tips:

- If holiday traditions take too much time, try new, less demanding ones.
- If you were used to making dinner for a crowd, pass the hosting onto a family member, ask each guest to bring a dish, or order a dinner meal from a local store.
- Shop from catalogs or the Internet or buy gift cards at grocery and drug stores.
- Instead of presents, ask others for the gift of their "presence" to stay with your loved one to allow you to spend time meeting your needs.
- Get help and emotional support through the VA Caregiver website at www.caregiver.va.gov or call the Caregiver Support Line at 855-260-3274.



To Our Readers

In this issue, find out why you need an Advance Directive and how to get and fill out the "VA Advance Directive: Durable Power of Attorney and Living Will" form on page 3.



Learn how to decode the Nutrition Facts on food labels and shop for healthy foods on pages 4 and 5.

We are grateful for the Veterans and their family members who responded to the Readership Questionnaire about *Veterans Health Matters* and the Healthy Living Calendar that was in the Summer 2014 issue of *Health Matters*. Read what they had to say on page 6.

On page 7, exercise your mind doing the "Winter in the Sunshine States" activity and enjoy Maureen Cortese's banana nut bread recipe.

Lastly, I wanted to inform you that this is my last *Veterans Health Matters* column as I am retiring in early January 2015. I have worked for the VA just short of 36 years and have had a very fulfilling career. I am very appreciative of the opportunities that I've been given over the years to work with so many wonderful Veterans. This year has been a difficult one for VA, and the months and years ahead will continue to be challenging as we make the most of this tremendous opportunity to improve.

That said, I believe we are in a much better place than we were six months ago in the **VA Sunshine Healthcare Network** and in VA as an organization. We will continue to manage our challenges to getting Veterans timely access to health care while working towards a long term solution for greater capacity.

The best news is that the quality of VA healthcare remains strong—in the nation and in our hospitals and clinics in Florida, South Georgia, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. We have much to be proud of—and more work still to be done. Thank you for your service and support.

Joleen Clark, MBA, FACHE
VISN 8 Network Director

Pictured on the Cover: U.S. Army Veteran Virginia Hafler, a nurse during World War II (main image) and Robert Merriman, an Air Force Veteran who served during the Korean War (circle image), visit with their VA caregivers. Both Virginia and Robert participate in the West Palm Beach VA Medical Center's Medical Foster Home (MFH) Program. The MFH program is an alternative to a nursing home and long-term care. It is a community-based arrangement in a family setting for adults who cannot live independently. Learn more at www.westpalmbeach.va.gov/features/VAMedicalFosterHomeCareProgram.asp.

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What You Should Know about Advance Directives

We ask that as a VA patient, you become actively involved in your health care. Your doctor will explain the treatments for your illness and will work with you so you can decide which one is best for you. If you are too ill to understand your treatment choices or to tell your doctor what treatment you want, ask yourself:

- Who would you want to make these decisions for you?
- What type of health care would you want — or would *not* want?

Questions like these may be hard to think about, but they're important. That's why the VA wants you to know about an important legal form known as an Advance Directive.

What is an Advance Directive?

An Advance Directive helps your doctors and family members understand your wishes for medical and mental health care. It helps them to decide about treatments if you are too ill to decide for yourself — for example, if you are unconscious or too weak to talk. There are two parts of an Advance Directive: the durable power of attorney for health care and the living will.

What is a DURABLE POWER OF ATTORNEY for health care?

This form lets you name the person — i.e., your health care agent — who you want to have the legal right to make your health care decisions for you if you can't make them yourself.

You can choose any adult who and should be willing to make your health care decisions. Choose someone you trust and who knows you and your values. If you don't choose an agent, someone will be chosen to make decisions for you in the following order: legal guardian (if you have one), spouse, adult child, parent, sibling, grandparent, grandchild, or a close friend. If none are available, your VA health care team, or a court, will make decisions for you, following VA policy.

What is a LIVING WILL?

A Living Will is a legal form that states the kinds of treatments you would or wouldn't want if you became ill and can't decide for yourself. Writing down what kind of treatment you would or wouldn't want can make it easier for those who are asked to make decisions for you.

Do I Really Need an Advance Directive?

Yes! An advance directive lets your wishes be known and helps speak for you when you can't speak for yourself. It protects your right to make your own choices. Your advance directive is used only when you aren't able to make decisions yourself and can be changed or canceled at any time. Talk with your VA health care team to find out the process in your facility.

How do I complete an advance directive?

Fill out **VA Form 10-0137, "VA Advance Directive: Durable Power of Attorney and Living Will"** which is available at all VA Sunshine Healthcare Network facilities in Florida, South Georgia and the Caribbean. Talk to your VA health care team. They can help you fill out the form and will make your advance directive part of your medical record. You can also download the form, discuss it with your family members and bring it to your next visit. Download the form here: www.va.gov/vaforms/medical/pdf/vha-10-0137-fill.pdf.



A Treasure Map

to Understanding a Food Label

By Melody Chavez Assistant Chief, Nutrition and Food Service & David Folds, Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Coordinator, James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital, Tampa

Learning to read food labels along with smart shopping will help you make good choices that will make your health better in the long run.

When you are planning a road trip, you need a roadmap to help you to your final destination. Eating healthy is the same. Whether you are changing your eating habits to control your blood sugar due to diabetes, holding your weight steady, or just wanting to become healthier overall, the first and important step in making life's little changes is to understand your habits.

Knowing where you are helps you plan where you're going. A **food log** (where you write down everything that you eat) helps to set goals and see problems you didn't know you had. And understanding a food label can help you plan and shop for the healthy kinds of food you should eat.

Nutrition Facts on Food Labels

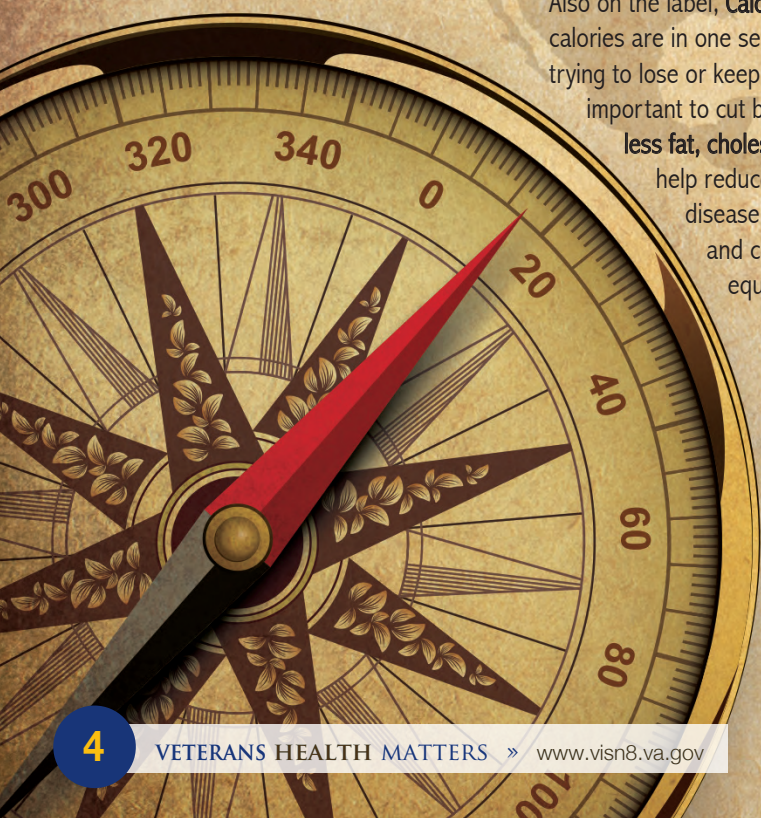
Look for the "Nutrition Facts" label on food boxes and cans. The food label helps you see which foods are healthy. Starting with the **Serving Size**, you can find the amount (how many ounces) for one serving. Also, the number of servings in the package or can is stated here. Compare the amount you eat to the serving size listed on the food label. If the serving size is one cup and you eat two cups, you are getting two times the calories, fat and salt listed on the food label.

Also on the label, **Calories** show how many calories are in one serving. If you are trying to lose or keep the same weight, it is important to cut back on calories. **Eating less fat, cholesterol and sodium** can help reduce your risk for heart disease, high blood pressure and cancer. All fats are not equal so the type of fat

you eat is just as important as the amount of fat you eat. Saturated fat can increase your blood cholesterol. Foods high in monounsaturated or polyunsaturated fat but low in other fat may reduce blood cholesterol.

Fiber is a type of carbohydrate that can be either simple or complex.

Simple carbohydrates, or sugars, are added to sodas and candy. **Complex carbohydrates** (the best kind!) include starch and dietary fiber and are found in plant foods like grains, potatoes and legumes. Foods high in fiber are often lower in fat and calories, can help you feel full, may lower blood cholesterol and may help control blood sugar. High fiber foods also help keep us regular which may prevent constipation and hemorrhoids. Some people think they should avoid carbohydrates when trying to lose weight, but the answer is no. They give us energy and are an important part of a good diet.



Vitamins A, C, calcium and iron are also important as they help with good health. These vitamins and minerals help reduce your risk of certain health problems such as osteoporosis and anemia. Protein is also listed on the nutrition label, although it's not required. Most Americans eat more protein than they need to. The Daily Value is not required on the label.

Shopping for Healthy Foods: Have a Plan

Shopping for healthy foods is also important. Having a plan is helpful. A walk around the supermarket will help you know your family's likes and dislikes. Sticking to a budget and using your store as a map is a good rule of thumb when shopping.

It is healthy to plan on filling half your cart with 50 percent fruits and vegetables.

The rest of the cart can be divided between proteins and whole grains. Generally, avoid the store's center aisles which tend to have canned, boxed, bagged and processed foods. If you must shop there, get only what you need and head for the walls. And stay away from the bakery, which can be very tempting. Go into the store with a list and don't ever shop when you're hungry—you'll tend to make less healthy choices and may spend more than you budget.



Your first stop should be in the produce section. Six vegetables and four fruits for the week is a great way to add healthy snacks. Plan healthy salads and sides dishes to have with your main entrée when trying to lose weight or stay on a goal weight. Moving along to the protein aisle, three lean meats such as pork, seafood and lean ground chicken or turkey can be great sources with a lot of meal choices.

Another aisle you should be visiting is the frozen section. Frozen fruits and vegetables are great items to purchase on sale and keep in your freezer for months. Sorbet, with fewer calories and less sugar, is an excellent option to satisfy that sweet tooth. A few items in the dairy section such as nonfat milk, eggs, nonfat Greek yogurt cheeses add additional flavor to meals and can be used to make creamy, low fat salad dressings. Finally, you want to grab some whole grains such as quinoa or whole wheat pasta which are important in a healthy week of eating!

These guidelines are designed to help you make sensible everyday choices for long term wellness. Eat smart and enjoy!

Decode Food Labels

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 2/3 cup (55g)
Servings Per Container About 8

Amount Per Serving

Calories 230 **Calories from Fat** 40

%Daily Value

Total Fat 8g **12%**

Saturated Fat 1g **5%**

Trans Fat 0g

Cholesterol 0mg **0%**

Sodium 160mg **7%**

Total Carbohydrate 37g **12%**

Dietary Fiber 4g **16%**

Sugars 1g

Protein 3g

Vitamin A **10%**

Vitamin C **20%**

Calcium **8%**

Iron **45%**

Compare the serving size to how much you actually eat.

5% DV or less is low and 20% DV is high.

Limiting these nutrients may help lower your risk for heart disease, some cancers and/or high blood pressure.

- Limit sodium to 1,500 mg/day.

Get enough of these nutrients to help improve your health and help reduce your risk for some diseases and conditions.

We Asked, You Answered

Results from our Reader Questionnaire

By Susan Wentzell, Managing Editor
Veterans Health Matters

We would like to thank the 272 Veterans and family members who replied to our Readership Questionnaire about *Veterans Health Matters* and the *Healthy Living Calendar*. You let us know what articles you want to see in future issues. You also gave us information about how you want to receive the magazine. It is currently distributed in VA medical centers and clinics in Florida, South Georgia, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. With all of this information, we can make the magazine and calendar better serve you.

The good news: your answers support our main goals of providing information that helps Veterans become better informed on healthy living and better manage their health. Here are some of the results:

- *Veterans Health Matters* was rated very highly (Excellent or Good) by 78 percent of you and nearly 70 percent said the same for the *Healthy Living Calendar*.
- A large percentage told us you made a positive behavior change because of the information you read. Some of you checked more than one behavior:
 - Become better informed on healthy living in general (36%)
 - Received valuable information that has helped me better manage my health (34.9%)
 - Registered on My HealtheVet (16.5%)
 - Called my VA healthcare provider for an appointment or for more information (13.6%)
 - Checked out the VISN 8 or VA facility website (11%)

Positive behavior change because of the information you read.

From your answers, we also learned you wanted more healthy recipes in *Veterans Health Matters*—including those for people with diabetes and high blood pressure. You also want articles on female health, battling weight gain, smoking cessation, managing blood pressure, nutritional supplements and their benefits, and interpreting blood test results.

There are clearly some areas we still need to work on. With your feedback, we will:

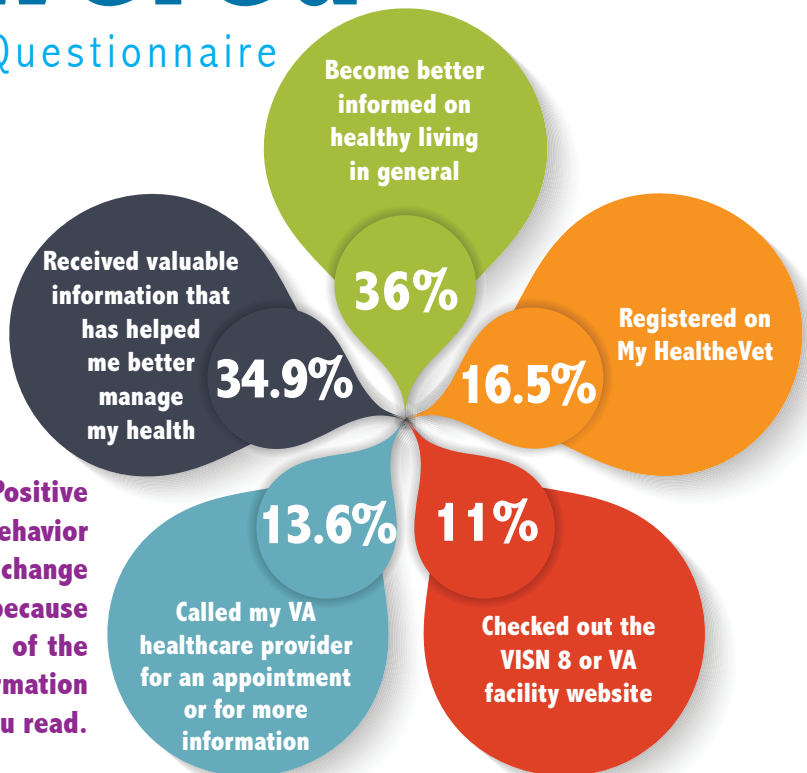
- Include more women Veteran-focused health articles. Only two percent of those who responded to the questionnaire were women Veterans. This is a clear sign we need to do more to reach and serve you. You are our largest growing population among Veterans and have unique needs in our system.
- Look at how to get the *Healthy Living Calendar* to more Veterans. Twenty three

percent of you said you don't see or pick up the Calendar at your VA facility.

- Look at ways to improve distribution of *Veterans Health Matters*. One-third (34%) said you would like to receive it electronically, either by e-mail (18%) or online (16%). Another 27 percent would like to get it by U.S. mail.

VISN 8 and the *Veterans Health Matters* Editorial Board will use all of your answers to improve our publications. Our common goal is to continue to provide our Veterans with the most useful, up-to-date health information possible. Please contact us with your comments and suggestions. Send a note to visn8communicationoffice@va.gov or call Susan Wentzell at (727) 575-8072.

Thank you for your continued support!



WINTER IN THE SUNSHINE STATES

Can you spot 8 differences between these two pictures?



- Answers**
1. Birds are flying in different directions
 2. The stick the Beaver is holding is different
 3. Beaver's belly button
 4. Turtle's back leg
 5. Missing tooth on Shark
 6. Sponge color is different
 7. Extra leaf on palm tree
 8. Number of bubbles (right side of illustration)

Banana Nut Bread

By Maureen Cortese, MSN/Ed, CDE

Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Program Manager; Orlando VA Medical Center

Ingredients

½ cup vanilla yogurt (low fat)	1 ¾ cups all-purpose flour	1 cup sugar	2 tsp baking powder
1 large egg	½ tsp baking soda	1 tsp vanilla	1 Tbs. milk (1%)
1 cup smashed bananas (3)	½ cup pecans/walnuts — optional, reduce fat grams by omitting		

Directions

1. Combine bananas, sugar, yogurt, egg, vanilla in a large bowl. Beat until well blended. Combine flour, baking soda, baking powder. Add nuts if you are going to include.
2. Add flour mixture to banana mixture, stirring until moistened. Spoon into a 8 ½ x 4 ½ X 3 inch loaf pan coated with baking spray and flour.
3. Bake 350 degrees for 65 minutes or until a wooden tooth pick inserted into the center comes out clean.
4. Cool 10 minutes on wire rack.
5. Remove from pan and cool completely on wire rack.

Nutritional Information: Makes 10 servings. Each serving has 227 cals, 44 gms carb, 5 gms fat, 4 gms protein, 2 gms fiber and 81 mg sodium.





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Veterans Crisis Line

If you or a Veteran you know is in crisis, the caring professionals at the VA's **Veterans Crisis Line** are specially trained to help. Dial **1-800-272-8255**, Press 1 to talk to someone confidentially. Visit www.veteranscrisisline.net for more resources.

VA Sunshine Healthcare Network

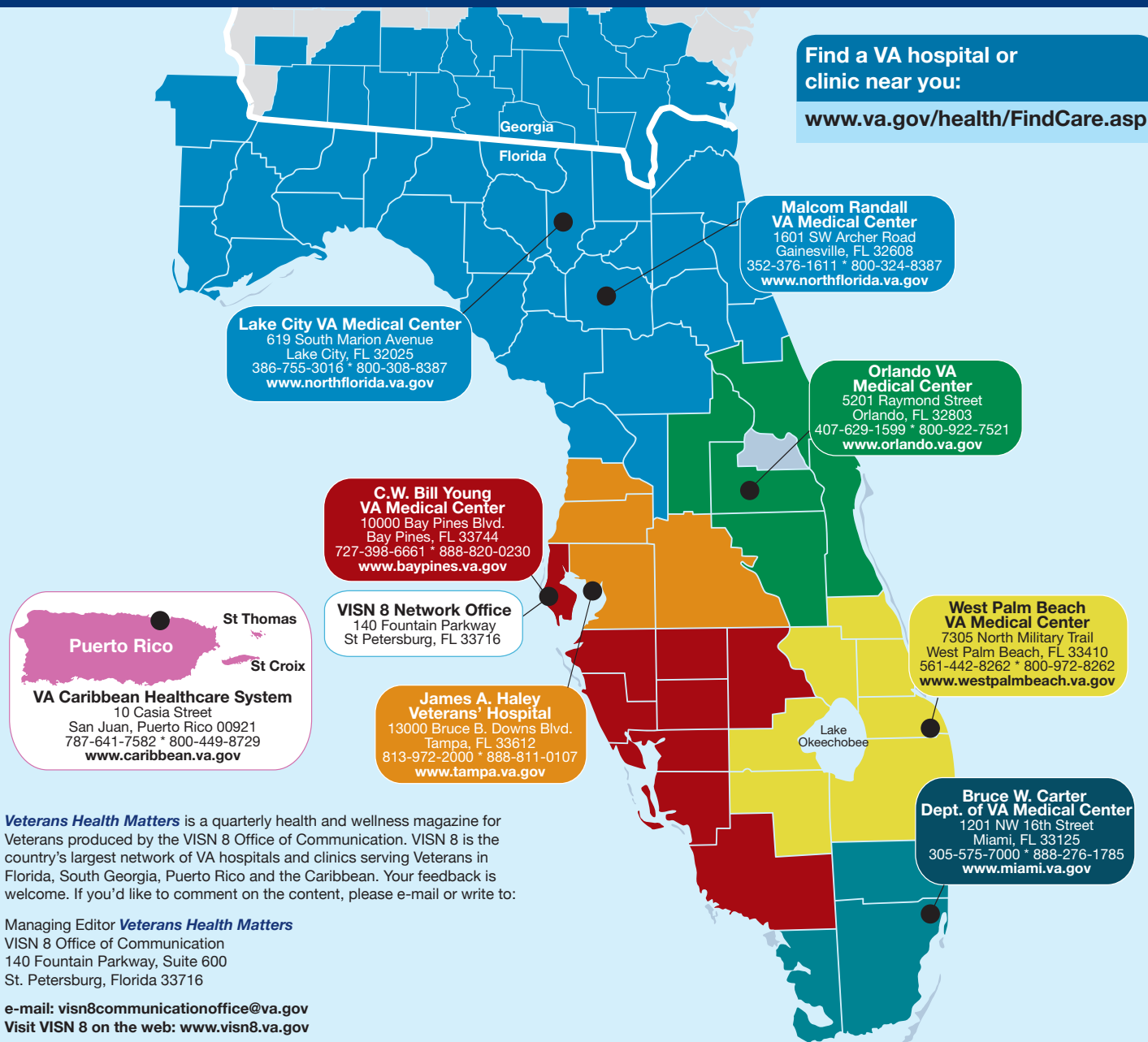
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Medical Centers

Find a VA hospital or
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www.va.gov/health/FindCare.asp



Veterans Health Matters is a quarterly health and wellness magazine for Veterans produced by the VISN 8 Office of Communication. VISN 8 is the country's largest network of VA hospitals and clinics serving Veterans in Florida, South Georgia, Puerto Rico and the Caribbean. Your feedback is welcome. If you'd like to comment on the content, please e-mail or write to:

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